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CPYRGHT **Diem: The Post Mortem**

One of America's most respected war correspondents last week leveled a shocking accusation against the State Department. The correspondent is Pulitzer prize-winning Marguerite Higgins. After extensive interviews with the ruling military junta in South Vietnam, she says flatly that the downfall of Diem was ordered by the State Department and effected by the CIA. And she names names: Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Under Secretary of State Averell Harriman, and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Roger Hillsman.

Writing in the magazine *America*, Miss Higgins says that this self-appointed band of activists overruled the objections of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and CIA director John McCone. Her chronology follows:

In any case, on August 24, the State Department sent out word—without the knowledge of Secretary McNamara or of CIA Director John McCone—instructing Ambassador Lodge to “unleash” the Vietnamese generals with a view to toppling the Diem government if they could . . .

On Sunday, August 25, Washington publicly gave the generals a green light in a Voice of America broadcast that virtually called on the Vietnamese military to take over. At the same time, Ambassador Lodge asked the CIA to poll the Vietnamese generals and see when and if they were ready to translate revolt talk into action . . .

In separate interviews with this correspondent, members of the military junta spoke of these factors:

1. The late President Kennedy called, at a press conference, for “changes of policy and maybe personnel” in Vietnam.
2. Washington announced the withdrawal of 1,000 American soldiers by the end of 1963, and possible total withdrawal by 1965.
3. The economic aid was cut. Many generals agreed that this cut was psy-

chologically the most decisive goad to a coup . . . “In cutting economic aid, the United States was forcing us to choose between your country's help in the war and Diem. So we chose the United States.”

These in themselves are serious charges, but Miss Higgins goes on with a severe indictment of Ambassador Lodge. As the weeks went by, Diem agreed to many of the concessions which the Americans demanded—but these concessions never were publicized either by the press or by the Ambassador. Miss Higgins quotes a diplomat as saying: “Ambassador Lodge and his deputy, William Truehart, were so determined to get rid of Diem that they were opposed to putting him in a conciliatory light. They were afraid this would strengthen the hands of those in Washington against a *coup d'etat*.” Moreover, on the morning when the bombardment began, Diem telephoned Lodge and asked if Washington were behind the attack. Lodge replied that it was too early in the morning to find out; and when pressed further, he offered Diem a plane to get out of the country.

All of this chicanery was evident to observers in this country, if only darkly. Even without Miss Higgins' first-hand investigation, it was plain that Diem was a puppet betrayed by American liberals without moral scruples. But there is an even darker side yet to Miss Higgins' story: The leader of the false Buddhist controversy turns out to have a strange, untold history.

Thich Tri Quang was supposedly a villified Buddhist monk, courted by the CIA, and eventually given asylum in the American embassy by Ambassador Lodge. This same Thich Tri Quang, who was so skillful in directing the pagoda mimeograph machines, the

flag demonstrations, and the suicides, is a refugee from the north. He was twice arrested by the French for his dealings with Ho Chi Minh. By his own admission he was a member of the Vietminh Communist liberation front. His own brother is at this moment working at Ho Chi Minh's Ministry of the Interior, in charge of directing subversion in South Vietnam. All of this proves nothing about his current attitude toward the Communists; perhaps it qualifies him to join the Lodge for President Committee.

At the very least, a Congressional investigation is called for. And there are already signs that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee may call Miss Higgins as a witness. The Diem affair was dirty and prolonged; the post mortem is just beginning.